

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 13 NOVEMBER 2001**

#### **RE-INTEGRATION OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION FUNDING IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

##### **Report by the Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the Education Committee of the re-integration of Pre-School education funding into the generality of the local government settlement in April 2002 and the subsequent policy implications for East Ayrshire.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

It was confirmed last year that the pre-school grant resources would be returned to local authority control once the Scottish Executive's target for the expansion of pre-school education was, in the main, achieved.

The special grant for pre-school education will be reintegrated into the local government settlement in April 2002. Correspondence has now been received from the Scottish Executive regarding the policy implications for local authorities.

#### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

The consolidation of Pre-School Grant Funding within GAE alongside the substantial pre-existing resources for nursery education and the funding for Sure Start Scotland and the Childcare Strategy, enables authorities to take a more integrated approach towards the resourcing of pre-school education and childcare.

The Scottish Executive aims to improve outcomes for children and families and secure a coherent approach towards the planning of children's services including childcare and early education.

Reintegration of the grant offers the opportunity to link early education more closely and effectively with childcare. It is envisaged that Pre-School education will fully integrate within a wider system of childcare for all families, recognising that they both have defining characteristics.

### **3.1 Free and Charged Provision**

As national policy moves further towards the integration of Pre-School education and childcare, consideration requires to be given to the relationship between the obligation of the Council to secure free Pre-School education and the aims of the Childcare Strategy in facilitating access to affordable childcare.

The provision of full day places and wraparound care is additional to the core service of Pre-School education. Therefore it is appropriate to consider the levying of a charge for this service which is affordable to parents. This will be subject to a separate Committee report.

### **3.2 Admissions Policy**

As part of the strategy for enabling access to integrated childcare and early education, a revised Early Education and Childcare Admissions Policy will need to address the following areas:

- the criteria for access to Pre-School education places offering full day and wraparound care
- fees payable for full day/wrap around care
- Pre-School education for deferred entry children

Proposals in relation to the first two are subject of a separate Committee report.

## **4. NEW DUTY**

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 introduces a new duty on local authorities to secure Pre-School education for all eligible children, who are to be defined by Order under the Act. The term "secures" enables local authorities to discharge their duty by entering into arrangements with other providers of Pre-School Education in the voluntary and private sector.

Local authorities are expected to continue to commission partner providers through the voluntary and private sector. For the next two years the Scottish Executive Education Department will continue to set an advisory floor for the price at which places in partner centres might reasonably be purchased.

From January 2002 it will be for authorities and not the Scottish Executive Education Department to take final decisions on applications by providers to become partners in the provision of Pre-School education.

The new duty, along with other Pre-School provisions in the 2000 Act will commence in April 2002 to coincide with the reintegration of resources to local authorities. Statutory guidance under the 2000 Act on local authorities functions in relation to Pre-School Education will be issued in due course.

#### **4.1 Pre-School for Deferred Entry Children**

On 12 June 2001, the Deputy Minister for Education announced an extra year of free part-time Pre-School education for children with January and February birthdays whose parents choose to defer their child's entry to primary school.

The extended entitlement will come into effect at the beginning of the school year 2001 – 2002 with the first eligible children (those who become four in January or February 2002) beginning their deferred year in August 2002.

These extended entitlements will be reflected in the Order required under Section 32 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 defining categories of eligible children. The Order will come into force by April 2002.

ADES in consultation with COSLA are developing guidance on criteria for determining deferrals where local authorities will retain discretion, namely for children with September to December birthdays. This guidance will ensure that decisions locally are made against a nationally developed set of criteria.

### **5. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Local Authorities will continue to carry responsibility for the quality support and monitoring of performance in their own and partner Pre-School centres. The document, *The Child at the Centre*, will remain as a guide to support self-evaluation and improvement linked to standards for inspection of providers of Pre-School education.

#### **5.1. Independent Inspection**

From April 2002, the inspections which HMIE has carried out will be replaced by inspections undertaken by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care in collaboration with HMIE.

The Commission will inspect at least annually, all day care services for children, including community nurseries, nursery schools and classes and partner providers offering Pre-School education against the new National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare

HMIE will join those inspections, which have a strong education focus agreeing with the Commission where best to deploy its resources. Further guidance will be issued from the Commission and HMIE about how such educationally focused inspections will be conducted, their frequency, scope and duration.

## **7. LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** There will be no change to the level of existing resources available to local authorities for nursery education. In financial year 2001/02 in East Ayrshire this is £2,674,234.
- 7.2** Resources for financial year 2002/3 – 2003/4 will be distributed primarily on the basis of the participation of 4 year olds in pre-school. In future years this will be on the basis of 3 and 4 year old participation rates.
- 7.3** No additional resources will be allocated nationally for children who have deferred entry to primary school. If however, rates rise above the current projections the adequacy of resources to local authorities will be reviewed.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1** Members of the Education Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational & Social Services

19 October 2001  
KG/SB

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Re-integration of Pre-School Education Funding
2. Implications for Policy and Practice – September 2001

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104.

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR**

<b>AGENDA</b>
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